7: Murphy E-5 (1952-1953)1957 SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

726 even short expeditions could well take a party over 100 miles from home; and 100 miles through dense, trackless forest and across major streams is no mean trip.

It is obvious that Mundurucú warfare consisted of much more than sporadic and short forays. The average party campaigned only during the dry [132] season, setting out when the rivers fell in May and returning before they again rose in November. Longer expeditions set out at the end of the rains and remained in the field throughout the rainy season and the following dry period, returning before the next rains.

721 As among the Indians of the North American Plains, youths sought openly for the excitement of war and looked upon it as a means of self-validation and 554 aggrandizement of prestige. But unlike the Plains Indians, the Mundurucú did not openly assert this prestige once it was won; if anything, the person who achieved status became even more self-effacing and less prone to open competitiveness. The young men, however, did not embark upon raids by themselves. They expressed their desire to the chief of the village in words indicative of the martial disposition of the society: "My grandfather, take us to hunt the pariwat. We wish to die in the forest, not in the village." The chief consulted with the older men in order to decide whether the occasion was auspicious. If there was general approval, he proceeded to organize a war party that would include the eager young but would be under the competent [561] direction of experienced elders, for age in Mundurucú society was an important criterion of status.

721 Although the initiative for a war originated in one village, men from several villages participated. The determination of a village to form a war party 202 was quickly communicated to other communities, but a formal invitation had to be extended. This was carried by a man of the *Muchacha* society, a group [575] of older warriors who were especially well versed in Mundurucú lore and songs [701] and who had taken enemy heads. As the messenger neared each village he [534] sounded three short blasts on a horn used only by members of the society, and was answered by a like signal from a Muchacha of the village being invited. After entering the village, he delivered the invitation and proceeded on his itinerary, collecting volunteers from a number of communities.

621 Intervillage cooperation enabled the Mundurucú to place large war parties 701 in the field without stripping any one village of all its manpower. Those who took part generally desired to clear land for gardens first, but even when this 722 was not possible or when the expedition lasted more than a year, the horticultural cycle could be maintained by those remaining behind. The problem of leadership of a group drawn from several communities was resolved by delegating authority to two village chiefs who were also members of the Muchacha society. Actually, the two formal leaders did not have absolute control, and all important decisions were made by the older men of the expedition acting as a body.

708 The war party was accompanied by the wives of the warriors and a number of unmarried girls. Their tasks were to carry cooking utensils and all of

12:Murphy E-5 (1952-1953) 1960
SQ13 Mundurucu SQ13

greatest protection from the weather. Other men, first of the same clan and then of the same phratry, hang their hammocks adjacent to these older men, but the boys and adolescents are expected to sleep in the less favored forward part of the eksá whatever their lineal affiliations. This is less a violation of clan unity than an affirmation of the prestige accorded to age in Mundurucú society.

The men's house is the single most important institution in the structuring of male activity. It serves as an informal forum in which plans are discussed and decisions made, and each man interacts with every other man to a greater extent within its precincts than if the village were organized strictly along extended family lines. The men generally take their first meal of the day in the men's house, shortly after dawn, and set out from there in groups for the day's hunt. On their return to the village, they leave their kill with their wives and then go to bathe. They return from the stream to the men's house and there relax in their hammocks until all have returned and the evening repast is ready. Some pass their time while waiting in making baskets, bows, arrows, and other items. When the food is cooked, a younger member of each household goes to the house to bring its contribution to the communal meal. A loud shout goes up to call in the stragglers, and all gather about the pots. The oldest help themselves first, and second choice is given to the boys. After the evening meal, the occupants of the eksá lie in their hammocks and converse; most fall asleep soon after night falls.

The emphasis on coöperation between the men transcends the practical necessities of Mundurucú ecological adaptation, and it is looked upon as good and valued behavior in itself. No man refuses an invitation to take part in garden breaking, for, not only will he one day expect reciprocity, but to refuse would be to disassociate himself